

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

TALKING POINTE



SUMMER 2025

The Australian Ballet acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia. We recognise those who danced their own stories for millennia before us and their continued connection to land, waterways and culture.



Cover: Principal Artists Jill Ogai and Marcus Morelli.
Photo Pierre Toussaint
Above: Principal Artist Marcus Morelli.
Photo Sally Kaack

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Principal Artists Jill Ogai and Marcus Morelli
Photo Sally Kaack

Philanthropy Director's welcome

Kenneth Watkins AM



“You have so much *to be proud of*”

What a year 2025 has been. A year of contrasts, it's been one of our most exhilarating and also one of the most financially challenging in our history.

Through it all though, one constant remains: you. Our Ballet family who never fail to lift us up, celebrate our work and share our deep connection to this art form, these artists and the joy of live performance.

As we look ahead to Season 2026, a season curated especially for you, I'm reminded that at the heart of the word '*ballet*' you find '*all*' – a quiet, powerful reminder that this timeless art form is for everyone.

Just as ballet is for everyone, so is the act of giving. This season – like every season – is supported by you. Every person reading this issue of *Talking Pointe* is making a difference. You are making everything we do possible.

2025 has marked some extraordinary philanthropic milestones in our company's history. 20 years ago, Ken Reed AM gave The Australian Ballet its first \$1 million gift to support new work. Since then, the income from that original gift has helped bring several works to life including *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*® (2017), *Annealing* (2022), *Identity* (2023) and *Circle Electric* (2024).

The International Touring Fund also turned 20 this year. It began when Frances Gerard AM, inspired by the company's opening night of *Swan Lake* in London, established a fund to support our global presence and aspirations. Today, it's the backbone of our international touring program, accelerating our ambitions to share the best of Australian dance with the world.

We're celebrating ten years since David McAllister's *The Sleeping Beauty* became our very first community-enabled full-length production. A multi-layered fundraising campaign raised \$1.7 million, allowing David to realise his dream – one that continues to enchant audiences today.

Storytime Ballet also began in 2015, inspired by then-Executive Director Libby Christie's visit to the United States and her vision to do more to engage young Australians. 600 performances later, it remains one of the jewels in our crown. I can't tell you what a joy it is to sit in the theatre and watch children experience ballet for the first time. Even more so knowing that these children are our future.

In 2025, we also celebrate five years of David Hallberg's leadership and the visionary gift from Lady Potter AC, CMRI that established The David Hallberg Fund for Artistic Aspiration. With over \$14.1 million raised – more than half from Lady Potter AC, CMRI herself – this fund has empowered David's artistic vision by making productions like *Jewels*, the reimaging of *Don Quixote*, world premiere of *Oscar* and refurbishment of *Manon* possible.

This rich tapestry has been woven by people coming together to realise the dreams and aspirations of the company. To everyone who has made these moments possible, I simply say: wow! Look at what you've done. You have so much to be proud of and we are all so very thankful.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kenneth Watkins', written in a cursive style.

Kenneth Watkins AM
Philanthropy Director

Company news

As Season 2025 comes to a close, we recognise fresh talent, honour our legacy and deepen our commitment to inclusion and excellence. From dynamic new appointments to a landmark partnership and a digital tribute to our history, here's what's new!



Artists of The Australian Ballet
Photo Pierre Toussaint

Welcoming new dancers to our Ballet family

We're thrilled to welcome an exciting wave of talent to The Australian Ballet. Eleven dancers across multiple ranks have been appointed following international auditions and selections from The Australian Ballet School, representing a balance of global experience and emerging Australian talent.

Precious Adams (USA) joins as senior artist for our 2026 season. Internationally acclaimed, Precious trained in the US, Canada, Monte Carlo and Russia, and has been dancing with English National Ballet since 2014, where she is currently First Soloist.

Finnish-born Marko Juusela (FIN) also joins us for Season 2026, as a soloist. A graduate of the Vaganova Ballet Academy, Marko began his career with the Mariinsky Theatre before performing with Polish National Ballet.

Damen Axtens (NZ) joins as a Coryphée, bringing experience from Birmingham Royal Ballet, Royal New Zealand Ballet and Paris Opera Ballet. Damen trained at The Australian Ballet School and the Royal Ballet School.

Our corps de ballet will also be strengthened by seven new members. Estelle Crompton-Lamb (AUS), Natalie Henry (JPN), Stephanie McQuire (AUS) and Bronte Mollison (AUS) are all graduates of The Australian Ballet School who have already graced our stages through national tours and mainstage productions.

LilySophia Dashwood (AUS) a Royal Ballet School graduate, debuted with us in *The Sleeping Beauty*, sharing the stage with her sister, Soloist Isobelle Dashwood, during Isobelle's Aurora debut in Brisbane. Naylson Guimarães (BRA), a graduate of ABT's Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School, also made his professional debut in our Brisbane season of *The Sleeping Beauty*.

Isabella Howard (AUS) returns to Australia to join the corps de ballet after seven years with Birmingham Royal Ballet. We have also welcomed Nanami Inoue (JPN) to the corps de ballet. A student of Royal Winnipeg Ballet School, Nanami brings valuable experience from her time dancing with Tulsa Ballet and State Opera Ruse in Bulgaria.

We look forward to introducing you to some of these new faces in our Winter 2026 issue of *Talking Pointe*.



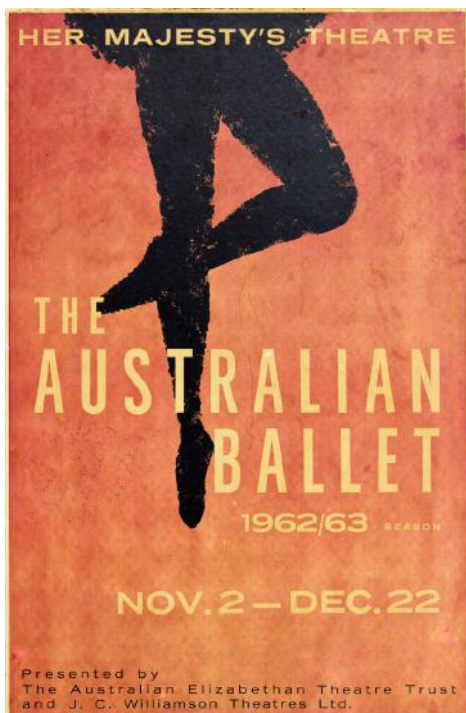
Laura Hillenius

New Director of Artistic Health appointed

After an extensive global search, we're excited to announce Laura Hillenius as our new Director of Artistic Health.

Laura returns to Australia from Europe, where she has been leading the Health Team at Dutch National Ballet, since 2020. Laura began her physiotherapy career at The Australian Ballet in 2002, during our premiere season of Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake*, going on to work with the company for 11 years as the department grew into the globally renowned team we know today.

Laura's experience includes working with the renowned Sydney Dance Company, Bangarra Dance Theatre, and Nederlands Dans Theater as well as on *Billy Elliot the Musical*. We're delighted she will be bringing her global expertise, and her family home to Australia.



Queer Town Founder, Archie Beetle and David Hallberg
Photo Sally Kaack

Celebrating our partnership with Queer Town

In October, to coincide with Queer History Month, we proudly announced that The Australian Ballet has formalised an official partnership with Queer Town - a queer-led organisation driving positive cultural and systemic change in workplaces, schools, and communities through inclusive education, storytelling, digital media and community engagement.

This partnership builds on two years of meaningful collaboration, including a comprehensive company wide training program ahead of the 2024 world premiere of *Oscar*. It reflects our ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion - and to standing up to discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community.

Explore our new online history hub

Take a trip down memory lane with a brand-new web page that honours the rich history of The Australian Ballet.

Launched in November, to mark the 63rd anniversary of our debut performance (*Swan Lake* at Sydney's Her Majesty's Theatre) our new online history hub is a celebration of the company's luminous legacy.

This digital archive invites you to explore the people, places and performances that have shaped our story, from our earliest seasons to today's global stages.

Scan this QR code to relive the moments that made us.



In memoriam

We were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Garth Welch AM and Colin Peasley OAM earlier this year – two of The Australian Ballet's *founding members* and *most distinguished artists*.



Garth Welch AM

Garth Welch brought extraordinary presence and charisma to the stage in leading roles across *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Raymonda* and *Don Quixote*. He also originated unforgettable roles in works such as Robert Helpmann's *The Display* and *Yugen*. His legendary partnership with fellow principal artist, and later wife, Marilyn Jones, became one of the golden pairings of Australian ballet.

Beyond performance, Garth was a gifted choreographer and teacher, shaping generations of artists and contributing works including *Othello*, *Mozartiana*, and *Variations on a Theme* to our repertoire. His lifelong service to dance was recognised with the Order of Australia in 1981, a Sydney Opera House Honour in 1994, and induction into the Australian Dance Awards Hall of Fame in 2002.

We will remember not only the brilliance of his artistry, but the generosity with which he nurtured the next generation of dancers and choreographers.

Garth Welch AM
Photo James Robinson

Colin Peasley OAM

Colin Peasley, a much-loved artist, teacher and friend, devoted more than 50 years to The Australian Ballet and to ballet across Australia.

As a dancer, he was remarkable – especially in his cherished character roles such as the original Gamache in Rudolf Nureyev's *Don Quixote* and Baron Mirko Zeta in *The Merry Widow*, which were created on him and have become woven into the fabric of our repertoire. Even after stepping back from full-time performing, Colin continued to delight audiences with guest artist appearances, most recently in 2019.

Offstage, his impact was equally profound. As ballet master and répétiteur (1975–1993), he generously shared his knowledge with generations of dancers. In 1994, he formally established our public education program, later serving as education manager until 2010. Colin was named artist in residence in 2011 and, during our 50th anniversary season in 2012, retired after an extraordinary half-century of continuous service.

Colin was also a passionate advocate for the future of the company. As the first ambassador for our Planned Giving and Gifts in Wills Program, he inspired members of our community to give back to the company by leaving a personal legacy.

His immense contribution was recognised with the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1996, induction into the Australian Dance Awards Hall of Fame in 2005, and the Green Room Lifetime Achievement Award in 2013.

Many will remember Colin's great stories – he knew it all. From the company's earliest days, he gave us the inside story on so many moments that only he could tell. We will remember him not only as a performer of rare talent, but as a teacher, mentor and advocate who helped shape the heart and spirit of The Australian Ballet – always with his trademark humour.



Colin Peasley OAM
Photo Lisa Tomasetti

Vale Garth and Colin. Our thoughts are with their family, friends, and all who were fortunate to know and love them.



S/26
A SEASON
FOR YOU

“We made it with
you all in mind”



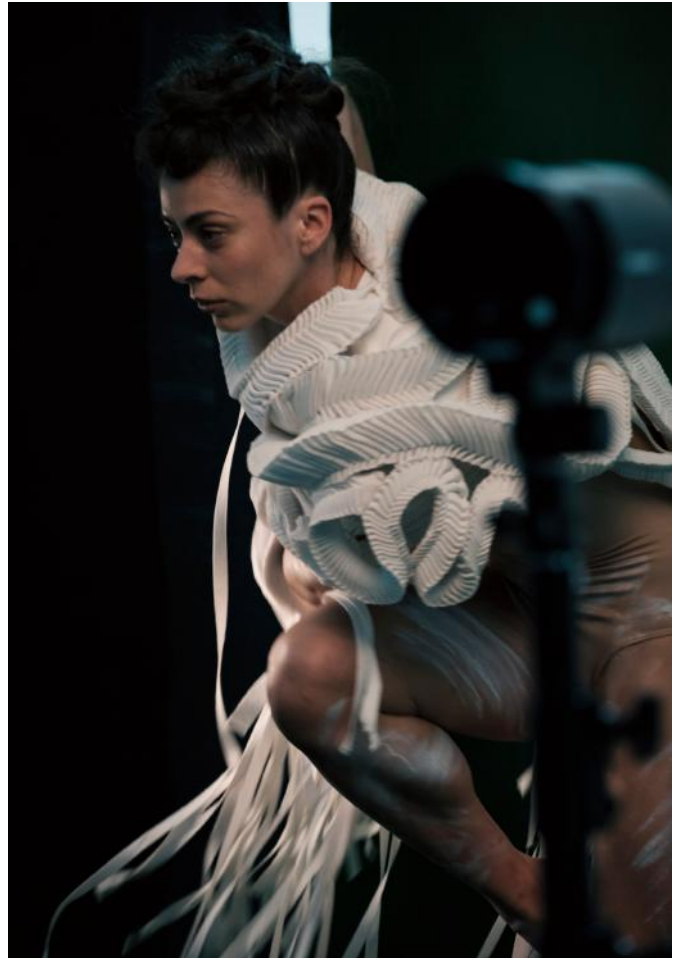
Principal Artist Robyn Hendricks and Davi Ramos with David Hallberg

Season 2026 has been unveiled and it's dedicated to you: our Ballet family. Infusing love, joy, tradition and connection into one rich program, this season has been curated for the community that lifts us up, celebrates our artistry, and shares our deep appreciation of live performance.

"We made it with you all in mind," shares Artistic Director David Hallberg. In 2026, David invites you to journey with the company through a diverse and dynamic repertoire that reminds us of ballet's luminous past while venturing boldly into its future. It's a season that deepens our connection to story, place and each other – a celebration of tradition, imagination and creative possibility.

Six remarkable seasons await: *Signature Works*, a special showcase of some of the company's most treasured ballets; the timeless magic of *The Nutcracker* and The Stuttgart Ballet's *The Sleeping Beauty*; the iconic romance of *Romeo and Juliet*; the dynamic energy of *Copland Dance Episodes*; and *Flora*, a bold new commission created in collaboration with Bangarra Dance Theatre.

Opposite page: Elijah Trevitt, Jett Ramsay, Isabelle Dashwood and Lilla Harvey
Photos Sally Kaack



Courtney Radford from Bangarra Dance Theatre

"I'm incredibly proud to present this season to our audiences," says David. "Season 2026 promises to reignite cherished memories and create vivid new ones. It's a season of collaboration and cultural dialogue, most notably through *Flora*, our groundbreaking partnership with Bangarra Dance Theatre. By bringing together diverse voices and perspectives, we honour ballet's rich heritage while shaping a future that is vibrant, relevant and inclusive."

Beyond the mainstage, The Australian Ballet will continue to meaningfully engage with communities across the country. Our National Tour will visit Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales and the Northern Territory, bringing world-class ballet to regional centres, while Storytime Ballet and our education program will inspire young audiences through performances and workshops in schools nationwide.

To our giving community, we thank you. Your support makes everything possible. Season 2026 has been thoughtfully crafted with something for everyone and we can't wait to share it with you.

Celebrating our Ballet family

Meet Brian and Carol Negus



Keep an eye out for patrons Brian and Carol Negus in our Season 2026 campaign, alongside other ballet fans talking about their love of the art form.

These devoted 'ballet buffs' have been subscribers of The Australian Ballet since the early 1960s when the company's performances at Melbourne's Princess Theatre provided a romantic backdrop to the early days of their budding relationship.

Over the decades, Brian and Carol have shared many a magical moment in the theatre. Among their most treasured memories are watching Rudolf Nureyev and Lucette Aldous in *Don Quixote*, and the "magical partnership" John Meehan and Marilyn Jones shared in *Romeo and Juliet* – performances that have stayed with them ever since. They're looking forward to seeing the next generation of dancers revisit the work in 2026.

Now, more than sixty years later their love for The Australian Ballet is as strong as ever; a love they now share with their family who have also become subscribers. They're just as inspired by the company's evolution, counting *Kunstkamer* and *Oscar* among their modern favourites. When asked what keeps them coming back, they say, "because it carries us away into a magical different world."

Brian and Carol's story is a beautiful reminder of the lasting impact ballet can have – not just as an art form, but as a shared experience that connects us across generations. We're honoured to celebrate them as part of our Ballet family.

**Curious about our ballet buffs?
Scan this QR code to meet them!**



Brian and Carol Negus
Photo Jo Duck

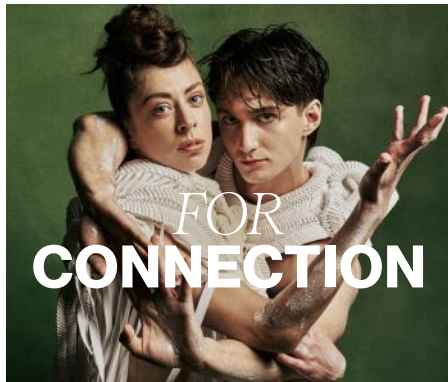
S/26 FOR YOU

Step into Season 2026. Your year of breathtaking ballet begins here.



SIGNATURE WORKS

28 February — 1 March
Regent Theatre, Melbourne
with Orchestra Victoria



The Australian Ballet x
Bangarra Dance Theatre

FLORA

Frances Rings

12 — 21 March
Regent Theatre, Melbourne
with Orchestra Victoria



ROMEO AND JULIET

John Cranko

24 April — 13 May
Sydney Opera House
with Opera Australia Orchestra



COPLAND DANCE EPISODES

Justin Peck

23 June — 2 July
Regent Theatre, Melbourne
with Orchestra Victoria

6 — 21 November
Sydney Opera House
with Opera Australia Orchestra

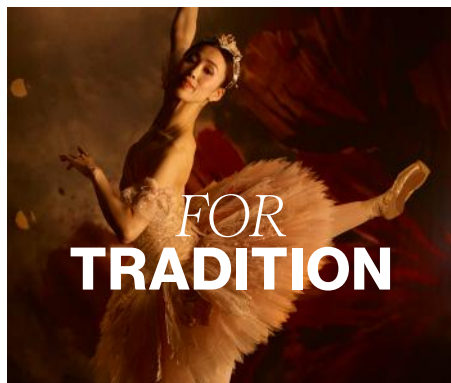


The Stuttgart Ballet

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

Marcia Haydée

9 — 18 October
Regent Theatre, Melbourne
with Orchestra Victoria



THE NUTCRACKER

Peter Wright

28 November — 16 December
Sydney Opera House
with Opera Australia Orchestra

Claire Spencer AM and David Hallberg
Photo Eugene Hyland





Turning pointe

David Hallberg and Claire Spencer AM on leading The Australian Ballet into a bold new era

As The Australian Ballet prepares for its final year of performances at Melbourne's iconic Regent Theatre, Artistic Director David Hallberg and Executive Director Claire Spencer AM join Philanthropy Director Kenneth Watkins AM to reflect on a year of transformation, resilience and bold artistic ambition.

From navigating financial headwinds and embracing new creative horizons, together they share how their partnership is shaping a new era for the company - one defined by energy, empathy and excellence.

“We’re *ambitious, welcoming* and *always thinking of our audiences* – not just in what we present, but how we elevate their experience.”

Claire Spencer

Kenneth: Claire, you joined The Australian Ballet earlier this year. What was it about this moment, and this organisation, that made you say ‘yes’?

Claire: Three things really drew me in: the art form, the company and David. I’ve been what I like to call ‘ballet adjacent’ since arriving in Australia in 1999. There’s something truly unique about The Australian Ballet and the way the company bursts onto the stage. The energy embodies the spirit of the country and what it means to be Australian. As someone who isn’t Australian by birth, but who has adopted this country as home, that’s something I’ve reflected on a lot over the years.

There was also the opportunity to work with David. I knew of him from my time at Arts Centre Melbourne and I had read his book, *A Body of Work: Dancing to the Edge and Back*. It’s an extraordinary story – one of commitment, ambition, hardship, recovery and humanity. What he has accomplished here has been visionary, ambitious and uncompromising. His leadership has had a ripple effect, not just within the company but across the wider arts community.

Kenneth: You’ve hit the ground running, working closely with David to guide the company through a period of real transformation. What’s that experience been like for you so far?

Claire: When you’ve worked alongside a company for 20 years, as I have with The Australian Ballet, it’s easy to think you know it. But stepping inside, you realise there’s so much more to learn. This initial period has been about listening and learning. Spending time with the many talented people behind the scenes of this great company, being in the studio with the dancers, getting to know our audiences and supporters, experiencing the joy of the art form, and understanding the complexities that are unique to this organisation.

Coming from a venue background into a producing company has been incredibly exciting. Ballet is infused into every molecule of this organisation – it’s magical. You can’t help but be immersed in it: the dancers, the music, the art. It’s a joy and it’s infectious.

Being at the Sir Robert Helpmann Theatre in Mount Gambier earlier this year, for the opening of the National Tour was a joyful example of this. Especially seeing all the young dancers coming in straight from class buzzing with their energy and anticipation – so, so special.

Kenneth: David, what’s it been like collaborating with Claire during this pivotal time?

David: Claire’s experience is exceptional. But what’s really struck everyone is her warmth as a leader. She’s stepped into a role that demands steely focus and tough decision-making, and she’s shown she brings that, absolutely. But what she brings alongside it is warmth, empathy, laughter and joy. These qualities make her a very supportive partner, and she brings real expertise in implementing a clear vision – one that works not just artistically, but for the business of ballet.

Kenneth: Our 2024 Annual Report showed a financial loss of over \$21m, reduced to \$9.1m with philanthropic and investment support...

Claire: We always knew that being out of the State Theatre in Melbourne would have a serious financial impact, and that’s exactly what’s happened. But while it’s been a significant challenge, we absolutely welcome the Victorian Government’s investment in the Melbourne Arts Precinct. It’s fabulous for Melbourne and it’s fabulous for Victoria.

Because we had anticipated this period of disruption, we were able to plan for it and bring our community along on the journey with us. That’s where my experience as a CEO, CFO and as an accountant has been helpful: building out our business repertoire to complement our artistic repertoire by honing efficiencies, carefully managing costs and finding opportunities for revenue growth.

Kenneth: What role has our philanthropic community played during this time?

Claire: We’re very fortunate to have such an incredibly supportive community. The people in our Ballet family who have contributed to our Innovation Fund and The David Hallberg Fund for Artistic Aspiration in this period, have made it possible for us to maintain our focus on making really great ballet.

From the development of *Oscar* to our international and domestic touring footprint, we haven't compromised on our artistic endeavour and quest for artistic quality. That might sound simple, but continuing with David's ambitious program is a privilege we don't take for granted.

Without philanthropic support, we would have had to scale back on excellence, on reach and on ambition. With our community's generosity, we've been able to push forward and aim even higher for our audiences.

Kenneth: David, to what extent are commercial realities shaping your artistic direction and programming decisions?

David: They are definitely influencing my artistic vision, but not at the cost of creativity. Take *Oscar*, for example, and our reimagined production of *Swan Lake* – some of our richest repertoire has emerged from this time, thanks to the generosity of Lady Potter and her co-contributors to The David Hallberg Fund.

Adjusting our programming to meet commercial needs doesn't mean surrendering to difficulty or compromising my curatorial eye. It means broadening our repertoire to offer our audiences a full arc of diverse and fulfilling works. That balance is essential.

Kenneth: We're now preparing for our final year at the Regent Theatre in 2026. While it's been a welcoming 'home away from home', there's a real sense of anticipation about returning to the State Theatre...

Claire: You're right. We'll look back on our time at the Regent with real fondness. Jason Marriner and his team have made our company and our audiences feel so welcome. Orchestra Victoria's visibility in the bespoke pit has been a real highlight too.

To return to the State though – one of my favourite theatres in the world, one of the dancers' favourites – will be an incredible moment. It's our home, our home theatre. The stage is glorious, the space is intimate, and we always get such a generous welcome from our audiences there.

"I deeply admire how he has faced and overcome the challenges the company has been experiencing. I knew he was someone I would love to work with."

Claire on David

"Her laugh is infectious. It reverberates through the company."

David on Claire

From a business perspective, it's a game changer as well. It allows us to bring back our big repertoire that we know people have yearned for, and the back-of-house upgrades at Arts Centre Melbourne will significantly improve production safety and efficiency.

David: I feel like the Regent Theatre gave us a unique opportunity to sharpen our perspective on what we can present to audiences. *Oscar* was born there, and the energy surrounding that premiere was electric. I remember sitting in the Dress Circle, surrounded by people who were experiencing ballet for the first time – drawn in by that work. That kind of opportunity was made possible by the venue.

Still, there really is no place like home. The State Theatre offers the scale we need, and it's where our full vision can come to life. It's one of the world's great theatre experiences.

Kenneth: Looking to the next five years, what's your vision for the company?

Claire: We talk about this a lot and both feel that this is a start of a new era for The Australian Ballet. We've come through COVID and a period of disruption, and we're ready to burst into a glorious new chapter.

David: It feels like it's the perfect time to harness the energy within and around the organisation and channel it through all that we do. The energy our audience feels when they walk into a performance; the energy of the dancers on stage; the devotion of our patrons...

Claire: We have an Artistic Director who's in full flight, dancers who are world-class and a five-year plan for repertoire that will be game-changing. We're ambitious, welcoming and always thinking of our audiences – not just in what we present, but how we elevate their experience.

There's also an ease and grace to how we work. Not just in how our dancers move, but in how we do the business of ballet. There's beauty in that duality and if we continue to get that balance right, this company will absolutely soar.

David: And what a feeling that is! When the curtain goes down, I go backstage, stand in the wings and hear the applause, knowing that it all came together. That's when you realise the magic that we create and the joy we share together.



Vikki Attard on tour, *The Sleeping Beauty* (Gielgud),
Tokyo. Photo Jim McFarlane, 1993

Generosity that moves us

Celebrating 20 years of the International Touring Fund

In 2005, after witnessing the power and artistry of The Australian Ballet's opening night performance of Graeme Murphy's *Swan Lake* at the London Coliseum, Frances Gerard AM was moved to make a visionary gift. Her generosity laid the foundation for the International Touring Fund – a vital resource enabling the company to share its work with audiences around the world.

Two decades later, the Fund stands as one of the most transformative in the company's history. With support from a growing community of passionate donors, it has made eleven international tours possible, allowing our artists to serve as proud cultural ambassadors for Australia and bringing the excellence of Australian dance to global stages.

The Australian Ballet's commitment to international touring dates back to 1965 when, just three years after the company was founded, it embarked on an ambitious five-month journey through the United Kingdom, Lebanon, nine European capitals, Los Angeles, and Honolulu.

We've since built on this foundation to earn a global reputation for technical brilliance, artistic integrity and creative versatility.

As Australia's national ballet company, we are deeply connected to both the national and international dance communities. Touring remains central to our vision: to present the very best of Australian artistry to the world, and to enrich our dancers with formative experiences that shape their careers and deepen their craft.

Today, the International Touring Fund is more important than ever. With the rising costs of global touring, this Fund ensures that our international ambitions remain achievable. Without it, regular touring would be financially prohibitive.

We are profoundly grateful to Frances Gerard for her foresight in 2005, and to the many generous supporters who have since contributed to the Fund. Together, they are propelling our global vision forward – strengthening our presence on the world stage and helping to secure our place among the great ballet companies of the world.

The International Touring Fund is supported by the following members of our giving community.

The late Derek Braham &
the late Ann Braham
Marilyn Burton
Ms Laurie Cowled AM
Frances Gerard AM

Lionel Frederick Hann &
Harry John Colligan Fund
In memory of Mrs JJ Holden
The late Ian Johnson &
the late Dale Johnson

Lachlan & Sarah Murdoch
Mrs R H O'Connor
Mrs Roslyn Packer AC
Dr Valmai Pidgeon AM
Mr Kenneth R Reed AM

Renaissance Tours
Ross Stretton Fund
endowed by Bee Fletcher
Talbot Family Foundation
Mrs Mary Ann Wright



Jake Mangakahia on tour, Paris 2016.
Photo Anita and Bernard Mangakahia

International touring timeline

Since the establishment of the International Touring Fund, in 2005.

- **2006**
Auckland, New Zealand;
Shanghai, China
- **2007**
Tokyo, Japan
- **2008**
Paris, France; London
and Manchester, UK
- **2010**
Tokyo and Nagoya, Japan
- **2012**
New York, USA
- **2014**
Los Angeles and
San Francisco, USA
- **2015**
Beijing and Shanghai, China
- **2016**
London, UK
- **2019**
New York, USA
- **2023**
London, UK
- **2025**
Tokyo, Japan

A historic tour to Tokyo

This year, The Australian Ballet paid tribute to our enduring cultural connection with Japan, marking our seventh tour to the country – 57 years since our first visit in 1968, and 15 years since we last graced the stage of the world-renowned Bunka Kaikan Theatre. And what a return it was!

We presented Rudolf Nureyev's *Don Quixote*, a grand tribute to Nureyev's legacy with The Australian Ballet. This production is generously supported by Lady Potter AC, CMRI, as well as the individuals behind The David Hallberg Fund and The Barry Kay Fund.

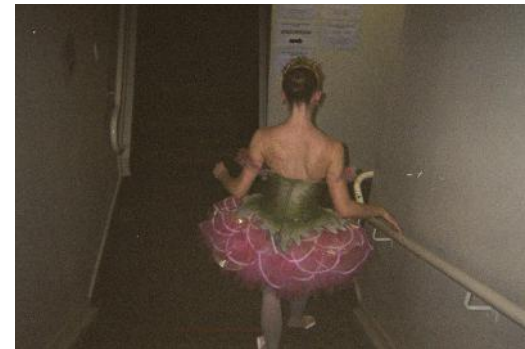
Always a logistical feat, the tour involved over 100 members of The Australian Ballet, including dancers, production crew, wardrobe, and medical support, all traveling to Tokyo with the sets, costumes and technical equipment required to bring *Don Quixote* to the stage.

Principal Artists Ako Kondo and Chengwu Guo led the company with brilliance in the roles of Kitri and Basilio. The entire ensemble rose to the occasion with exuberant energy, thrilling Tokyo audiences and media alike, with reviews hailing The Australian Ballet as “one of the world's most talked-about companies.”

Adding a further layer of artistic depth, Artistic Director David Hallberg invited the incomparable Sylvie Guillem – former Étoile of the Paris Opera Ballet and protégé of Nureyev – to coach the dancers before their departure and accompany the company to Tokyo. Her presence was a source of inspiration and support to all on the tour.

This was Sylvie's third time preparing our artists for their performances, previously assisting with both *Don Quixote* and *Swan Lake* for our 60th anniversary season in 2023. Sylvie's continued collaboration with our artists is further evidence of the meaningful relationships David continues to foster with world-leading creatives, creating unforgettable moments in our dancers' careers and enriching their artistic journeys.

The 2025 Japan tour was made possible thanks to the generous supporters of the International Touring Fund.



Wish you were here!

To capture the spirit of the tour, we gave our dancers disposable film cameras and asked them to document candid behind-the-scenes moments. Here's a selection of our favourite shots from Soloist and Philanthropy Ambassador Drew Hedditch, Coryphée Montana Rubin, and Corps de Ballet Dancer Alexandra Walton. They didn't disappoint!

“I don't usually like to ask
for money, *I ask for help*”

Lady Potter AC, CMRI: *a true friend, benefactor
and trailblazer of The Australian Ballet*



Lady Primrose Potter AC, CMRI has her name above the door of The Australian Ballet Centre for good reason – many reasons, in fact.

A lifelong devotee of ballet and a visionary supporter of the arts, Lady Potter's lifetime contribution to The Australian Ballet exceeds \$9 million. Lady Potter's romance with ballet began in 1936 when, as a young child, her mother took her to a performance of the Ballets Russes. The piece was Aurora's Wedding from *The Sleeping Beauty*, and – like Aurora herself – she was spellbound. From that moment on, a passion was born.

Lady Potter's formal involvement with The Australian Ballet began later, in 1975, following her marriage to Sir Ian Potter, a founding board member of the company. This partnership marked the beginning of a long and transformative relationship between Lady Potter and Australia's national ballet company.

One of her earliest and most ambitious contributions came in 1988, when she spearheaded fundraising for The Royal Gala Performance of *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Royal Opera House in London. Danced in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the performance was the crowning jewel of the company's Australian Bicentennial Tour – and a defining moment for The Australian Ballet on the world stage.

In 1989, Lady Potter became President of Annual Giving, a role she held with distinction for nearly three decades. Under her stewardship, the program flourished into one of the strongest philanthropic initiatives in the Australian performing arts sector. Today, it has raised over \$60 million from more than 20,000 dedicated supporters – a testament to her ability to inspire generosity and build a lasting community.

Lady Potter has always followed ballet faithfully, travelling extensively to attend seasons at home and internationally, always keeping her finger on the pulse of the art form and those shaping its future.

With a keen eye for talent and sense of duty, in 2016 she took David Hallberg under her wing when he underwent rehab with The Australian Ballet's Artistic Health Team for a potentially career-ending injury. Over the course of his stay in Melbourne, a special friendship blossomed – one that continues to this day.

Lady Potter was so struck by David's individuality, presence and artistry that she travelled to Moscow in 2019 to see him perform *Onegin* with the Bolshoi Ballet.

It was over dinner one evening that she encouraged his application to succeed David McAllister as the eighth Artistic Director of The Australian Ballet. "I said to him, 'you've got to do it' – and he did!" she recalls. In 2021, David stepped into the role and has subsequently evolved the company into what Lady Potter proudly calls, "a truly international company."

That same year, Lady Potter further demonstrated her belief in David's leadership and commitment to the company's future by establishing The David Hallberg Fund for Artistic Aspiration – a fund dedicated to enabling his artistic vision without compromise. Her initial gift sparked a wave of support from the wider community. "I don't usually like to ask for money, I ask for help," Lady Potter explains. "And in this instance, I invited my friends to help realise David's artistic vision. People are very generous when they like something." Over five years, the fund has raised more than \$14.1 million and supported some of the company's most ambitious productions, including *Jewels*, *Don Quixote*, *Oscar* and *Manon*.

Lady Potter speaks with great warmth and pride when she reflects on David's fruitful first five years as Artistic Director. "It seems like yesterday when he took on the role and yet the company has evolved enormously over that time. Suddenly The Australian Ballet has become world famous – everybody, everywhere wants to know what he's doing and be a part of it. He's really raised the bar."

As it turns out, the feeling is mutual. Affectionately referring to Lady Potter as a "superstar", David credits her with both building an unshakeable foundation of support for The Australian Ballet, and for spotting and empowering his true potential.

"Over the course of my career, I've been fortunate to benefit from many mentors, both personally and professionally. Primrose has guided me in both capacities," shares David. "She has an extraordinary gift for seeing things as they truly are and expressing them with clarity and conviction. Her passion has given me opportunities to shape my vision and this company's journey in ways that I'd never have thought possible."

Lady Potter's legacy is etched not only in the buildings and programs she has helped bring to life, but in the lives and careers she touches, the artistic excellence she nurtures, and the belief she holds in the power of ballet to inspire and uplift.

David Hallberg and Lady Primrose Potter AC, CMRI,
President Emeritus, Annual Giving
Photo Nicole Reed



Sharing the spotlight.
The dazzling return of

DanceX



Melanie Lane, *Dream Swamp*
Photo Gregory Lorenzutti



Jenni Large, *Wet Hard Long*
Photo Giana Rizzo

After a triumphant debut in 2022, DanceX – a festival of dance in all its glorious forms – returned in 2025. Bigger, bolder and more brilliant than ever.

Conceived and curated by Artistic Director David Hallberg to celebrate the power, diversity, and boundless creativity of dance in Australia and New Zealand, the nations' most dynamic dance voices converged in Melbourne for two electrifying weeks.

This year's festival brought together 14 leading creative voices from across the dance sector. The Australian Ballet, Stephanie Lake Company – founded by The Australian Ballet's Resident Choreographer, Royal New Zealand Ballet, Bangarra Dance Theatre, West Australian Ballet, Restless Dance Theatre, Dancenorth, Gary Lang NT Dance Company, as well as choreographers Timothy Harbour, Lucy Guerin, Jenni Large, Jayden Lewis Wall, Melissa Yvonne Pham and Melanie Lane created works for the truly unique festival.

Generously supported by Lady Potter AC, CMRI and The David Hallberg Fund for Artistic Aspiration, The Hansen Little Foundation, and Linda Herd & The Linda Herd Fund for Contemporary Work, the festival took audiences on a journey across the full spectrum of dance. From contemporary to classical, and experimental to traditional, audiences embraced a rare opportunity to experience the vitality and vision of the region's top companies and independent artists all in one program.

Reflecting on the festival's vision, David Hallberg shared, "This festival is a bold celebration of the extraordinary creativity that defines our dance community. The companies and artists represented this year were only a small example of the rich community that defines the dance world around us. It's a rare opportunity for audiences to experience the diversity, power and artistic vitality of the many cultures and creative voices that shape our stages in this part of the world."

At its core, DanceX is more than a festival – it's a platform for connection, collaboration and cultural exchange. It invites audiences to witness the evolution of dance, to celebrate its traditions and to embrace its future.

Throughout the festival, a vibrant program of low and no-cost DanceX classes, workshops, and community events invited dance lovers of all ages to move, create, and explore alongside choreographers and creatives.

The Australian Ballet is proud to stand alongside such remarkable artists and companies, and to help shine a light on the extraordinary talent shaping the future of dance in our region.

Week one of the festival was generously supported by Dance Reflections by Van Cleef & Arpels.



“This experience has deepened my appreciation for the incredible support and opportunities we have at The Australian Ballet.”

Sara Andrlon

A season of growth

Sara Andrlon's artistic immersion with American Ballet Theatre, made possible by The Walter Bourke Prize

Coryphée and 2024 Telstra Ballet Dancer of the Year, Sara Andrlon, recently embarked on a transformative journey with American Ballet Theatre (ABT), thanks to a 10-week scholarship that saw her perform throughout the company's prestigious six-week season at New York's iconic Metropolitan Opera House.

Widely regarded as the pinnacle of ABT's annual calendar, "The Met season" is a dazzling celebration of artistry and scale. With its grand stage and 3,800-seat auditorium, fervent New York audiences, and the individuality and brilliance of ABT's dancers, the season offers an experience unlike any other.

During this whirlwind season, Sara immersed herself in the vibrant culture of New York City and relished the opportunity to dance alongside some of the world's finest artists. She trained and rehearsed with the company, receiving personal coaching from esteemed ABT alumni Amanda McKerrow, John Gardner and Clinton Luckett.

Sara also graced the stage of The Met in performances of *Swan Lake*, *Giselle* and *Sylvia*, following in the footsteps of The Australian Ballet's Artistic Director, David Hallberg and former Artistic Director Ross Stretton.

"The perspective I've gained from this experience has been invaluable," Sara reflects. "It's deepened my appreciation for the incredible support and opportunities we have at The Australian Ballet. I've returned with a renewed pride in our company and a profound gratitude for this experience."

This landmark opportunity was made possible by The Walter Bourke Prize, a visionary initiative established by Walter's friends following his death in 2004 to support The Australian Ballet's dancers by expanding their craft through international development. Past recipients of the prize include Danielle Rowe, now Artistic Director of Oregon Ballet Theater; Remi Wörtmeyer, Artistic Director of BalletMet; and Jessica Fyfe, Principal at Scottish Ballet.

Annabelle Watt and Drew Hedditch
Photo Simon Eeles



BEHIND THE CURTAIN

with Annabelle and Drew

In the latest instalment of our candid *Behind the Curtain* series, Philanthropy Ambassadors Drew Hedditch and Annabelle Watt speak to Coryphée Adam Elmes to reflect on his recent experience travelling on The Australian Ballet's 2025 National Tour with company dancers and students from The Australian Ballet School (ABS).

In this heartfelt conversation, captured exclusively for our supporter community, Adam offers a glimpse into the rhythm of life on the road, and discusses how touring fosters deep bonds within the company and builds lasting connections with dance communities across Australia.

Drew: You've just returned from the National Tour, travelling the country and stepping into leading roles you once dreamed of. How did that feel?

Adam: It was really special. I remember being a student on the tour, so it was a fun experience to see the (ABS) Level 8 dancers and reflect on that. It brought back a lot of memories.

Drew: The three of us have all toured as ABS students, feeling like professionals for the first time. It's a surreal moment.

Adam: It really is and it's funny, but even as a company member the experience felt surreal. I'm used to being the student on tour or in the lower ranks when I'm with the rest of The Australian Ballet but, in this scenario, we were like the principals.

We performed such great repertoire on this tour, and I got to dance roles I wouldn't usually get to, like the Diamonds pas de deux from George Balanchine's *Jewels*. I feel so

different about myself as a dancer and as a partner now. The National Tour is such a wonderful moment for growth, both for the students and for us as company dancers...

Annabelle: For the audiences too. That's high-quality art reaching regional communities. How did they respond?

Adam: They loved it! We're often in small theatres without orchestra pits, so you can see everyone and you can hear their reactions – the gasps and the giggles, the laughs and the joy. It's so intimate and rewarding.

Drew: From my experience going on tour, you really can't underestimate the power and passion of the Australian dance community, from big cities to smaller towns.

Adam: Yes! I had the opportunity to do a Q&A after one of the shows. It was so beautiful to hear how passionate they are and how much they love our visits. We don't always get to experience that level of enthusiasm up close.

“The National Tour
is such a *wonderful*
moment for growth.”

Adam Elmes



Mio Bayly and Adam Elmes
Photo Kate Longley



Mio Bayly and Adam Elmes
Photo Brodie James

Adam: Can I flip the question? What was the biggest difference between going on tour as a student and as a company member for you?

Drew: Definitely the sense of responsibility and leadership. You have to lead by example through your own behaviour and performance.

Annabelle: And you get 15 shows to grow into that leadership, to refine and deepen your performance.

Drew: Plus, you really get to know people. Touring is the best way to uncover personalities and build relationships.

Adam: Absolutely! Because we're all in it together. I loved that part as well – the leadership position you're in. It's amazing to realise that you can impact and influence how these students go about their final year of studies, and how they go into the professional world.

Drew: It's also a responsibility that's maintained beyond the National Tour. These are relationships that you maintain and continue until they graduate.

Adam: Exactly. We stay in the dance world together for a long time. Callum Linnane (Principal Artist) was one of the company members on my Level 8 tour, and I remember doing a show where I filled in for the Boyfriends role in *Coppélia* when a company member got injured. I did it, and I was so nervous but it went well. Callum was so happy for me and he told me he was proud of me. That was so special.

Annabelle: Of course! It was your first taste of being a professional. Those moments stay with you.

Adam: Yeah, that meant a lot to me. And now, to be on the other side – the company side – and to be giving back. That's something I'll always treasure.

Sharing the *joy of dance* across Australia

For over 40 years, The Australian Ballet has proudly brought world-class performances to dance lovers beyond our capital cities. National touring is a cherished highlight of our annual calendar, and we are grateful for the generous supporters of The Regional Touring Fund, The Ballet Society Victoria, and our Principal Partner, Telstra whose commitment makes this tradition possible.

Impact *in motion*

The *power* and *potential* of gifts in wills



Some of the most transformative gifts we receive at The Australian Ballet are from individuals whose generosity is realised after their lifetime.

Established 35 years ago, our Gifts in Wills Program has welcomed hundreds of generous individuals into a shared legacy of love and artistry. These members of our Ballet family – some unable to support the company during their lifetimes – have chosen to honour their passion for the art form by including The Australian Ballet in their will. In doing so, they have joined a special community united by a commitment to sustain the company for future generations' enjoyment.

These deeply meaningful bequests – gifts of every size – have helped build a strong financial foundation for the company and become a vital source of our long-term health and strength.

As the cost of creating extraordinary ballet rises, these heartfelt, future-focused gifts are generating an income stream for the company which will fund artistic excellence and secure our creative future.

“Members of our Ballet family who remember us in their wills are at *the heart of our artistic journey*. Their inspiration drives us to create impactful performances today and *their generosity enables us to invest in a vibrant legacy for the future*.”

David Hallberg, Artistic Director

Gifts in Wills

188

gifts in wills of all sizes have been received over the company's history so far.

50%

of The Australian Ballet's endowment funds come from gifts in wills.

400

supporters have confirmed their commitment to include The Australian Ballet in their estate plans.

From 2019–2024

7%

average annual capital growth has been achieved on gifts in wills.

\$4.5 million

of income earned from gifts in wills was dedicated to achieving artistic excellence, by funding essential company operations.

3

heritage ballet productions have had their costumes and sets refurbished with support from gifts in wills: *Romeo and Juliet* (2022), *The Dream / Marguerite and Armand* (2023) and *The Nutcracker* (2024).

5

new ballet productions have been brought to life with support from gifts in wills: *Volt* (2020), *Bodytorque* (2021), *Instruments of Dance* (2022), *Identity* (2023) and *Circle Electric* (2024).

How to remember The Australian Ballet in your will

If you're considering including The Australian Ballet in your will, here are a few helpful steps to guide you.

1

Discuss your plans

We encourage you to discuss your estate with your loved ones and to seek legal advice.

2

Consider your options

After these important conversations, decide how you would like to include The Australian Ballet in your will.



Percentage

You can leave a percentage of your entire estate.



Fixed

You can specify an amount to gift the company.



Residual

You can leave the balance of your estate, once you have looked after your loved ones.



Specific

You can nominate other items of value, including real estate or shares.

3

Incorporate your gift

Add your chosen gift to your will and remember that we are available to help with the appropriate wording.

4

Confirm your commitment

Contact us to confirm your commitment by providing an extract of your will or a letter from your solicitor. We will then welcome you into our Gifts in Wills community and invite you to join the Dame Peggy van Praagh Leadership Circle.



Trust matters. All funds received through gifts in wills are carefully overseen by The Australian Ballet's Board of Directors, in accordance with Board Policy.

We're here for you

Have you ever wondered how a gift in your will can secure the future of ballet? Our Gifts in Wills and Planned Giving Managers, Sonia and Jane, are here to support you with a confidential conversation.

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Scan this QR code to read our 2019-2024 Gifts in Wills Impact Report in full

A ballerina in a pink tutu is performing on stage. She has her arms raised and is looking upwards with a smile. The background is dark with some blurred lights and other performers in the distance.

CREATING BEAUTY

*Reawakening a timeless fairytale,
one gift at a time*

Ten years ago, something very special happened. A magical new chapter in The Australian Ballet's story began – one written not just by our artists but by you, our giving community.

In 2015, nearly 2,000 people answered the company's call to be part of a unique artistic journey by donating gifts of all sizes to help realise David McAllister's vision for *The Sleeping Beauty*. It was a landmark moment; the first time a major full-length production at The Australian Ballet was brought to life by the generosity of our supporters.

Every shimmering detail of the production – from the meticulous, hand-sewn costumes to the lavish, golden sets was a triumph of imagination, artistry and community. Thanks to our Ballet family and the expertise of celebrated creatives, this dream became reality. We remain profoundly grateful to everyone who made it possible.

This year, David McAllister's beloved production reawakened once again, to be danced by a new generation of artists and enchanting audiences in Adelaide, Brisbane and Sydney.

We had the pleasure of speaking with David as final rehearsals were underway for the Adelaide season. Here, he shares his reflections on creating *Beauty* and the enduring magic of collaboration.

Finding the inspiration

"There are certain ballets in your life that keep coming back," David recalls.

His first encounter with *The Sleeping Beauty* was in Perth, after being dismissed as a child extra for being too short. As a consolation, he was given opening night tickets. It was a formative moment that opened his eyes to a world of gilded opulence and fantasy.

Later, as a dancer joining The Australian Ballet in 1983, he performed in Maina Gielgud's production. "Working with Maina was a masterclass. She was like a direct line back to the Imperial Russian dancers who originally danced the work."

When it came time to stage his first full-length classical ballet, David chose *The Sleeping Beauty* – arguably the most famous and beloved of them all. "It was probably a little crazy," he laughs, "but I knew exactly what I wanted it to be."

Designing the magic

"The memory of how it all came together is still so vibrant," David says.

In classical ballet, design carries immense weight. Without spoken word, what the audience sees and what the dancers wear shapes their entire understanding of the story. David instinctively knew he wanted Gabriela Tylesova to bring his vision to life as the set and costume designer. They met in a Sydney café on his 50th birthday, where he pitched the idea. Gabriela said yes immediately. "It was the best birthday present ever!"

He envisioned a Baroque setting – timeless, opulent and ever-evolving. Gabriela, who grew up in the Czech Republic, was deeply familiar with Baroque architecture and aesthetics, so they were on the same page. Her designs blended 19th-century classical ballet with fantastical flourishes, making the production feel fresh and new. "She saw it through my eyes," David says, "but somehow made it look even better than I'd imagined."

Reconnecting with family

"This company and this production feel so much like family," David reflects.

"You may move away and have other experiences, but when you return, it feels like you've never been gone. Every time I come back to The Australian Ballet, it's like coming home." *The Sleeping Beauty* remains a tangible thread that binds him to his Ballet family.

The power of philanthropy

"The meaning of philanthropy is generosity – true support without strings attached," David says. "The Australian Ballet has really led the way in this area."

David believes ballet is an art form that changes lives and he's continually moved by those who've had transformational experiences in the theatre and chosen to give back. "They believe in this great company and want to ensure it continues to flourish."

During the creation of *The Sleeping Beauty*, the groundswell of support was not just financial, it was emotional. "It gave those of us who were in the room and making the production real confidence. If all these people think this is worth it, then it's going to be worth it." David pays tribute to every individual who supported *Beauty*, expressing, "Their legacy will continue through generations."

Did you know?

In the final weeks leading up to the opening night, many patrons volunteered their time – rolling up their sleeves to help bring the magic to life, by sewing fairy wings, gluing flowers onto costumes, and ensuring every detail was ready for its premiere. It was a true community effort in every way!



David McAllister and Principal Artist Jill Ogai
Photo Kate Longley



Mia Heathcote
Photo David Kelly

Spellbinding stats

- Over 300 bespoke costumes were designed by Gabriela Tylesova and hand-sewn over 12 months by our costume department and volunteers.
- 5,000 metres of tulle were used to craft the iconic tutus.
- The Lilac Fairy tutu took one month to make and weighs about 5kg.
- 130 sets of fairy wings fluttered to life on stage.
- Each of the 20 Nymph costumes was adorned with 200 handmade leaves – totalling 4,000 leaves.
- Gabriela designed each fairy's crystal-beaded tutu to reflect the unique gifts they bestow upon Princess Aurora.
- For the final act, the prince and princess wore gold organza cloaks trailing six metres behind them.
- Nicolette Fraillon and David McAllister spent 18 months refining Tchaikovsky's score.
- Our wigmakers hand-stitched 88 wigs, strand by strand.

Ballet Family events

Ballet Lover Morning Teas On Tour

June–July 2025

South Australia, Victoria and
New South Wales

Photos Sonia Brennan

Staying connected with our patrons is at the heart of what we do. So, as The Australian Ballet set off on its 2025 National Tour, our Philanthropy Team joined the journey – bringing the spirit of ballet to communities across the country through a series of Ballet Lover Morning Teas.

Held in most National Tour locations, these intimate gatherings invited local supporters to connect with fellow ballet enthusiasts, share their stories and hear the latest updates from the company. Many of our dedicated patrons travel far and wide to see us perform, so it was a joy to celebrate with them closer to home.



1.

1. (L-R) Orange, NSW – George, Dianne, Elisabeth, Suzanne, Marianne, Sonia and Jan
2. (L-R) Wollongong, NSW – Kelvin, Janetta, Marie, Sonia, Celia, Julie, Lesley, Therese, Mark, Elisabeth, Heather, Megan and Bill



2.

Philanthropy Events

From time to time, we invite our supporters to exclusive in-season events, offering special opportunities to engage more closely with the company.

To learn more, please contact us:

1300 752 900

philanthropyevents@australianballet.com.au

Dinner with the Dancers

11 September 2025

Luminare, South Melbourne

Photos Kit Photography

In September, The Australian Ballet presented its very first Dinner with the Dancers – an enchanting evening that brought guests closer to the heart of the company. Against the backdrop of the Melbourne skyline, the event was hosted by our talented corps de ballet and coryphée artists, offering a rare glimpse into the lives of the dancers who bring our productions to life.

Guests were warmly welcomed by Philanthropy Ambassadors Drew Hedditch and Annabelle Watts, who set the tone for an elegant and inspiring occasion. The evening featured exquisite catering, live music,

a captivating address from Artistic Director David Hallberg and a thought-provoking Q&A session hosted by former company artist, Brooke Cassen.

This exclusive event was made possible thanks to the dedicated efforts of a committee comprising Foundation Board Members and Ballet Ambassadors. Together, they helped raise almost \$140,000 to support The Australian Ballet's national touring, education, and community outreach programs – ensuring the transformative power of ballet reaches more people in more places.



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.

1. Members of the Dinner with the Dancers Committee – Claire Nichol, Claire Righetti, Sophie Rice, Sarah Alder, Cecilia Rosenberg (Co-Chair), Regina Levine (Co-Chair), Lisa Bolte, Anne Wilde, Cara Elsley, Sylvie Murray
2. (L-R) Jane Freudenstein AM, Regina Levine, Nina Aberdeen, Prue Brown
3. Philanthropy Ambassadors Annabelle Watt and Drew Hedditch welcome guests
4. David Hallberg addresses guests
5. Dancers of The Australian Ballet join guests for dinner
6. Guests enjoy a Q&A led by Brooke Cassen with Larissa Kiyoto-Ward, Alain Juelg and Belle Urwin
7. (L-R) Anita Dammary, Dr Richard Dammary, Sam Hupert and Kenneth Watkins AM

THE PHILANTHROPY TEAM

We invite you to reach out with any questions about how your generosity can help ensure a bright and enduring future for Australia's national ballet company.

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Scan this QR code to learn more
about the power of philanthropy
at The Australian Ballet.

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THE
AUSTRALIAN
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Principal
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THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET

PHILANTHROPY